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[The Link Between Heart Disease and Diabetes](#)

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Heart disease is the leading cause of adult death in the United States.¹ One in every four deaths is due to plaque build-up in the arteries, which restricts blood flow causing a heart attack or stroke.¹

Approximately 610,000 lives are lost to heart disease each year¹ and many could have been prevented by managing risk factors.²

One of the major controllable risk factors for heart disease is type 2 diabetes³, a medical condition that is on the rise in the United States. Nearly 30 million Americans have diabetes⁴ with about 95 percent of those having type 2 diabetes.⁵ Adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have heart disease compared to those without.³ That's because type 2 diabetes is a condition in which insulin is unable to work effectively. When the body is resistant to insulin, excess glucose (a form of sugar) collects in the bloodstream, which weakens arteries and may cause heart disease.⁶ Individuals with type 2 diabetes may also have other medical conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and high triglycerides, which add to their risk of developing heart disease.³



1st Class Stephanie Acevedo, from Arlington, Ill., listens to the heartbeat of Hospital Corpsman Hospitalman Apprentice Chester Williams, from Saint Louis, during training aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76). Ronald Reagan is underway, conducting tailored ship's training availability. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jonathan Nelson/Released)

The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) takes this risk factor for heart disease seriously. That's why we took a hard look at the diabetes-focused programs currently available to service members, retirees, and their families. What we found was a lack of diabetes self-management education (DSME) program guides and materials. To fill the gap, we launched the Diabetes Resource Collaboration Hub (DRCH).

The DRCH is an online community that connects diabetes educators to high-quality resources, promotes idea-sharing, and facilitates communication across the Military Health System (MHS). This includes NMCPHC, diabetes educators across the Department of Defense, and partners such as the Air Force Diabetes Center of Excellence. Our one-stop shop for collaboration enables diabetes educators to focus more time and effort on you, their patient, and less on developing education materials from scratch. Diabetes educators can use the materials to create a new DSME program or enhance an existing one. Examples of resources available within the DRCH include:

- Diabetes education curriculum and tools
- American Diabetes Association and American Association of Diabetes Educators Diabetes Self-Management Education Program Development Guidance
- Program Guide for Developing and Maintaining a Diabetes Self-Management Program
- Recruitment, Recommendation, and Referral Guide
- Diabetes Self-Education Guides
- Post-Course Patient Workbook
- Marketing Toolkit for MTFs



U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Clinton Ortiz, Installation Personnel Administration Center, Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, has his finger pricked to check his blood glucose level during an Armed Services Blood Drive aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., July 27, 2012. The Armed Services Blood Program is a joint military operation that provides blood donations to service members and their families. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Maggie Dorn/Released)

Not all risk factors for heart disease can be avoided, but there are steps that we can all take such as eating healthy, exercising regularly, and quitting tobacco to help prevent diabetes and reduce the risk of heart disease.

For service members, retirees, and their families:

- Check out [NMCPHC's Health Promotion and Wellness Toolbox on Heart Health](#) for more information on ways to protect your heart and improve your overall health.

For Navy diabetes educators:

- Check out the Common Access Card (CAC) enabled [DRCH milBook group](#) within milSuite for more information on best practices and ways to engage in online discussions and collaboration events about DSME.

References:

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